

Section 4

Assessing the CAHSEE Writing Standards

The English language arts (ELA) part of the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) assesses designated California content standards in writing for grades 9 and 10. The writing section uses a multiple-choice format to assess two strands: Writing Strategies and Writing Conventions. In addition, two constructed-response writing tasks address the Writing Applications strand. One of the tasks is a response to a reading passage, and the other is a stand-alone prompt. The Scoring Guides for both kinds of tasks are reprinted in Appendix A of this guide.

Writing Strategies and Conventions Passages

Many of the test questions on the writing section of the CAHSEE are based on reports and essays that represent typical student work. These passages contain typical student errors in diction, sentence structure, paragraph structure, and the conventions of written English, and students are expected to identify the errors and determine the best correction. Students may also be asked to determine appropriate introductory or concluding sentences for the passages. The length of the writing passages is between 200 and 300 words.

Writing Constructs Measured by the CAHSEE

The writing section of the CAHSEE focuses on ELA constructs that are taught and assessed throughout elementary, middle, and high school. The underlying cognitive constructs for the writing strands in the California content standards are shown in Table 6. A primary assumption in the California content standards for writing is that students can use learned strategies to write essays that convey clear perspectives on a subject, present a reasoned and organized argument, maintain a consistent tone and focus, and show evidence of mastery of the conventions of written English. The CAHSEE test question writers and reviewers verify that each question measures the appropriate construct as well as the content standard.

Table 6
Writing Constructs Measured by the CAHSEE

| Strand | Construct |
|---|---|
| Writing Strategies | Writing strategies: clear, coherent, and focused writing |
| Writing Conventions | Fundamental skills of written and oral English language conventions: grammar and mechanics of writing |
| Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics) | Writing applications |

The following pages of the Teacher Guide discuss the writing strands and content standards included in the CAHSEE. For most of the standards, there is also a discussion of a sample released test question. The three reading strands are

Writing Strategies
 Writing Conventions
 Writing Applications

Teachers will find this section of the guide useful in understanding how the California content standards are assessed on the CAHSEE. A thorough understanding of the standards and the test questions associated with them will help teachers focus their instruction on the content standards and better prepare students for the exam.

The Writing Strategies Strand

To demonstrate achievement in this CAHSEE strand, students must understand how coherence and sound organizational structure are achieved in expository writing. Students must also be able to recognize ways to revise text to improve coherence and structure. Test questions in this strand will require students to identify ways to organize text, the best sequence of ideas in a text, appropriate ways to begin paragraphs or essays, and appropriate ways to end paragraphs or essays. In addition, students should understand the importance of evidence to the development of ideas and assertions. Test questions in this strand require students to identify content that does or does not support main ideas or topic sentences or assertions that are or are not supported by evidence. The CAHSEE questions that focus on revision are based on essays and reports that represent rough drafts of typical student writing.

Students must also recognize the appropriate use of language in written text. Test questions in the Writing Strategies strand require students to identify the best way to

express an idea, ways to create interest and variety, the appropriate placement and use of modifiers, and the use of active rather than passive voice. In addition, questions require students to recognize the precise use of words, the best way to revise an ungrammatical or awkwardly written phrase or sentence, and appropriate ways to address the purpose, audience, and formality requirements of a specific writing task. The questions that focus on language use and revision of phrases and sentences are based on essays and reports that represent student rough drafts.

CAHSEE test questions in this strand also focus on research skills. Students are asked to identify sources of additional information for a topic, to recognize the characteristics of various research sources, and to evaluate the usefulness of sources for a specific task. Sources with which students should be familiar include almanacs, news sources, speeches, journals, technical documents, and the Internet. Other test questions focusing on research require students to recognize appropriate uses of the conventions for inserting citations into research papers.

The following pages discuss the seven content standards in the Writing Strategies strand on the CAHSEE.

| | | |
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| Strand | Writing Strategies | Which of the following sentences, if inserted before sentence 1, would make the MOST effective opening sentence? |
| Standard | 10.1.1 | <p>Establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintain a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.</p> <p>A Writing an essay is easy if one uses a computer.</p> <p>B Good essays are always written in black pen.</p> <p>C Any student can write a successful essay.</p> <p>D Teachers sometimes assign difficult essays.</p> |

CAHSEE test questions in this standard require students to demonstrate understanding of coherence of subject and tone in written text. Test questions may ask students to identify content that is not closely related to the rest of a passage, to determine the best way to organize text, to identify the appropriate sequence of ideas in a text, or to recognize the best way to begin or end a paragraph. Test questions are based on passages that represent rough drafts of typical student writing.

The sample test question is based on the passage “Essay Writing,” which is reproduced in Appendix C of this guide. The question requires students to identify a topic sentence that is appropriate to the passage. Before attempting to answer the question, students should read the entire passage and determine its focus. Because the passage consists of guidelines for composing an effective essay, choices A and B, which are statements about the mechanics of writing (use of computer or pen), are not well related to the main idea. Choice D is incorrect because the passage is not about the difficulty of writing but about ways to write effectively. Choice C is the correct response because it would begin the passage with the concept of writing successfully, which is the primary focus of the passage.

| | | |
|--|--------------------|--|
| Strand | Writing Strategies | Which of the following words is the BEST way to express the meaning of the word <i>thing</i> in sentence 1? |
| Standard | 10.1.2 | <p>A object</p> <p>B item</p> <p>C creature</p> <p>D article</p> |
| Use precise language, action verbs, sensory details, appropriate modifiers, and the active rather than the passive voice. | | |

CAHSEE test questions for this standard require students to understand the appropriate use of language in written text. Students may be asked to identify the best way to express an idea, the best way to use words to create interest and variety in a given situation, appropriate placement and use of modifiers, and correct use of active voice. Test questions are based on passages that represent rough drafts of typical student writing.

The sample test question is based on the passage “The Abominable Snowman,” which is reproduced in Appendix C of this guide. The question requires students to recognize that the word *thing* lacks interest and precision for the purpose of the sentence in which it has been used. Choice C is the best answer, as it is the best description of the Abominable Snowman. Students should recognize that choices A, B, and D are used to describe inanimate things and thus lack precision when used to refer to a living being.

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| Strand | Writing Strategies |
| Standard | 10.1.3 Use clear research questions and suitable research methods (e.g., library, electronic media, personal interview) to elicit and present evidence from primary and secondary sources. |

CAHSEE test questions in this standard require students to demonstrate understanding of research methods suitable for given purposes. Test questions may ask students to identify sources of additional information for a topic, including library resources, electronic media resources, and interviewing. The content of the test questions is drawn from reports and essays that represent rough drafts of typical student writing.

| Strand | Writing Strategies | Which of the following ideas is supported by details or evidence in the essay? |
|----------|--|---|
| Standard | 10.1.4 Develop the main ideas within the body of the composition through supporting evidence (e.g., scenarios, commonly held beliefs, hypotheses, definitions). | <p>A The world will never believe in the existence of the Yeti.</p> <p>B Yeti sightings cannot be explained by overactive imaginations.</p> <p>C A bear walking on its hind legs can appear to be a Yeti.</p> <p>D All mountain guides believe in the Yeti.</p> |

CAHSEE test questions for this standard require students to understand relationships between assertions and support. The types of support addressed in the test questions for this standard includes facts, examples, quotations, opinions from authorities, comparisons, scenarios, commonly held beliefs, hypotheses, and definitions. Students may be asked to recognize content that directly supports a given main idea, argument, or position, the best support for a given generalization, or a general statement for which details or evidence are not provided in the text. Test questions are based on passages that represent rough drafts of typical student writing.

The sample test question is based on the passage “The Abominable Snowman,” which is reproduced in Appendix C of this guide. The question requires students to analyze the passage to determine which ideas are supported by textual evidence. Choice C, the assertion that a bear on its hind legs may appear to be a Yeti, is the correct response. The text provides several details in support of this assertion, including the fact that bears are able to walk on their hind legs, that scientists have determined that Yeti footprints are probably bear prints, and that three of five recent Yeti sightings were determined to be bears. Choice A, the assertion that the world will never believe that the Yeti exist, overstates the information in the first part of sentence 15, and students should recognize that there are no details in the text that support this assertion. In fact, the second part of sentence 15 leaves open the possibility that the world might believe in the Yeti when given sufficient proof. Choice B repeats information in sentences 13 and 14, that the Yeti cannot be the product of overactive imaginations. Although there are sentences in the text that are sympathetic to this viewpoint, the text does not provide details or evidence to support it. In fact, sentence 3 states that “doubts still remain” about the existence of the Yeti, and the final sentence echoes this idea. Choice D, an assertion that all mountain guides believe in the Yeti, overstates information in sentences 13 and 14, and there is no evidence in the text to support this broad generalization.

| Strand | Writing Strategies | Based on the essay, which of the following would be the BEST source of information to demonstrate that the Yeti most likely does NOT exist? |
|----------|--|---|
| Standard | 10.1.5 Synthesize information from multiple sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information and the different perspectives found in each medium (e.g., almanacs, microfiche, news sources, in-depth field studies, speeches, journals, technical documents). | <p>A a book of Nepalese legends which contains stories about the Yeti</p> <p>B a documentary about the Yeti containing interviews with Yeti believers</p> <p>C a poster which has pictures of all known Himalayan mammals</p> <p>D a magazine article which demonstrates the falsehood of all supposed Yeti sightings</p> |

CAHSEE test questions for this standard require students to identify and compare the characteristics of almanacs, news sources, speeches, journals, technical documents, and the Internet. Test questions may also require students to understand the characteristics of sources that make them best for a particular use (e.g., journals for in-depth treatment; the Internet for immediate data; editorial page for opinions). Some items may require students to compare the quality or usefulness of information from more than one source. Test questions are based on passages that represent rough drafts of typical student writing.

The sample test question is based on the passage “The Abominable Snowman,” which is reproduced in Appendix C of this guide. The question requires students to identify research sources best suited for the purpose stated in the stem. The four answer choices represent sources a student might encounter in doing research on the Yeti, and students must evaluate and compare the sources to determine which one is most likely to be suitable for the purpose. Selecting the correct response also requires students to comprehend the main ideas of the passage. Choices A and B are not appropriate to the purpose because they are likely to support the possibility that the Yeti do exist. Choice C will not be appropriate because it will not include creatures whose existence is in doubt. Choice D is directly related to the research purpose and is the correct response.

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|--|---------------------------|---|
| Strand | Writing Strategies | What is the BEST way to write sentence 13? |
| Standard | 10.1.6 | |
| Integrate quotations and citations into a written text while maintaining the flow of ideas. | | <p>A “There has to be something out there,” says Raju, a mountain guide.</p> <p>B “There has to be something out there, says Raju, a mountain guide.”</p> <p>C “There has to, says Raju, a mountain guide, be something out there.”</p> <p>D Leave as is.</p> |

CAHSEE test questions for standard 10.1.6 require students to recognize appropriate uses of the conventions for inserting citations into text. Students should understand the importance of a grammatical match between the text and a quotation, and they should recognize an appropriate flow of ideas when a quotation is inserted into a text. Test questions are based on passages that represent rough drafts of typical student writing.

The sample test question is based on the passage “The Abominable Snowman,” which is reproduced in Appendix C of this guide. The question requires students to determine which answer choice uses the appropriate mechanics for placing a quotation in text and also best maintains the flow of ideas. Choice A is the correct response. It is punctuated correctly, and it also places the phrase, “says Raju, a mountain guide,” between the two sentences rather than awkwardly in mid-sentence. Choice B places the phrase appropriately but is punctuated incorrectly. Choice C is incorrect because it contains the awkward placement of the phrase and is punctuated incorrectly. Choice D refers to the sentence as it is given in the passage. This sentence is punctuated incorrectly and contains the awkward placement of the phrase “says Raju, a mountain guide.”

| Strand | Writing Strategies | Which is the MOST effective substitution for the underlined part of sentence 5? |
|----------|---|--|
| Standard | 10.1.9 Revise writing to improve the logic and coherence of the organization and controlling perspective, the precision of word choice, and the tone by taking into consideration the audience, purpose, and formality of the context. | <p>A and ridding of errors in grammar and mechanics</p> <p>B to get rid of errors in grammar and mechanics</p> <p>C and getting rid of errors in grammar and mechanics</p> <p>D Leave as is.</p> |

The focus of standard 10.1.9 on the CAHSEE is revision. Students are asked to revise individual sentences or phrases as they appear within drafts of typical student writing. Test questions require students to identify the revision of a sentence or phrase that results in the most precise use of words or the most appropriate or correct way to state an idea. Questions may also require students to recognize elements of a passage that contribute to the consistency of its tone.

The sample test question is based on the passage “Essay Writing,” which is reproduced in Appendix C of this guide. The question offers four versions of a sentence in the passage, and students must choose the one that is most effective. The version presented within the passage (choice D) is flawed because of its use of passive voice and the awkward construction ending the sentence: “can be got rid of.” Choices A and C are not correctly linked to the rest of the sentence, as they introduce a compound construction with “and” but are not parallel in structure to the infinitive phrase “to revise.” Choice B, the correct response, provides the simplest and most precise revision needed to express the idea.

The Writing Conventions Strand

The California content standards at every grade level emphasize the importance of the conventions of standard written English, and test questions on the CAHSEE reflect this emphasis. There are three main areas of focus within this strand: sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar and usage.

By the tenth grade, students should have developed an understanding of the basic aspects of appropriate sentence structure in English, including the use of main and subordinate clauses to show the relationship among ideas, the use of parallel structure in phrases and clauses, and the proper placement of modifiers. These aspects of sentence structure are an important focus for test questions in the Writing Conventions strand.

Students should also be able to demonstrate the ability to follow the conventions of standard English for punctuation, including the use of quotation marks, commas, underlining and italics, semicolons, colons, ellipses, and hyphens. CAHSEE test questions assess students' mastery of these conventions by using examples representing typical student writing.

The CAHSEE test questions that address grammar and usage focus primarily on common student errors in noun, pronoun, and verb use. Questions require students to recognize correct agreement between subjects and verbs, correct agreement between pronouns and their antecedents, and appropriate use of nouns and pronouns. Questions also focus on the use of correct pronouns for the objects of prepositions.

The following pages discuss the four content standards in the Writing Conventions strand on the CAHSEE.

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| <p>Strand Standard</p> | <p>Writing Strategies</p> | <p>Choose the answer that is the MOST effective substitute for the underlined part of the sentence. If no substitution is necessary, choose "Leave as is."</p> |
| <p>10.1.1 <i>Identify and correctly use clauses (e.g., main and subordinate), phrases (e.g., gerund, infinitive, and participial), and mechanics of punctuation (e.g., semicolons, colons, ellipses, hyphens).</i></p> | <p>Responsibilities of the job include <u>greeting customers, escorting them to a table, and offering beverages.</u></p> | <p>A greeting customers, escort them to a table and offering a beverage.</p> <p>B to greet customers, escorting them to tables and offering a beverage.</p> <p>C to greet customers, escorting them to a table, and to offer a beverage.</p> <p>D Leave as is.</p> |
| <p>10.1.2 <i>Understand sentence construction (e.g., parallel structure, subordination, proper placement of modifiers) and proper English usage (e.g., consistency of verb tenses).</i></p> | | |
| <p>10.1.3 <i>Demonstrate an understanding of proper English usage and control of grammar, paragraph and sentence structure, diction, and syntax.</i></p> | | |

CAHSEE test questions for standards 10.1.1 through 10.1.3 focus on the three main components of these standards: sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar.

Sentence Structure

As illustrated by the use of italics in the standards reprinted above, some CAHSEE test questions may require students to identify the appropriate use of coordination and subordination to express the relationship among ideas, the correct use of coordinate and subordinate conjunctions, and the appropriate use of participial, infinitive, and gerund phrases. CAHSEE test questions also may focus on sentence construction, e.g., parallel structure and proper placement of modifiers. Test questions may be based on passages that represent rough drafts of typical student writing, or they may be stand-alone items (not based on a passage).

The sample test question focuses on the use of parallel structure in a series. The correct answer, choice D, uses three parallel gerund phrases. The other choices offer nonparallel phrases and represent potential student errors.

| Strand | Writing Conventions | Choose the answer that is the MOST effective substitute for the underlined part of the sentence. If no substitution is necessary, choose "Leave as is." |
|----------|---|--|
| Standard | 10.1.1 <i>Identify and correctly use clauses (e.g., main and subordinate), phrases (e.g., gerund, infinitive, and participial), and mechanics of punctuation (e.g., semicolons, colons, ellipses, hyphens).</i> | <p>The Alaskan rivers are clear and sparkling <u>in summer however, they are frozen in winter.</u></p> <p>A in summer, however they are frozen in winter.</p> <p>B in summer; however, they are frozen in winter.</p> <p>C summer: however they are frozen in winter.</p> <p>D Leave as is.</p> |

Punctuation

As illustrated by the use of italics in the standard reprinted above, CAHSEE test questions for standard 10.1.1 may focus on the conventions for punctuation in standard written English. Test questions may require students to identify the correct use of the punctuation marks named in the standard: semicolons, colons, ellipses, and hyphens. Because several other forms of punctuation are addressed by the content standards in earlier grades, other CAHSEE test questions will assess these forms, including quotation marks for direct quotations and for titles; commas with introductory phrases, direct address, and compound sentences; and underlining and italics for titles. Test questions may be based on passages that represent rough drafts of typical student writing, or they may be stand-alone items (not based on a passage).

The sample test question requires knowledge of the use of the semicolon with a transitional adverb. Students should understand both of the conventions employed here, the use of the semicolon to join two independent and closely related clauses and the use of the comma after transitional adverbs such as *however*. Both conventions are correctly used in choice B. The other choices represent potential student errors: Choice A has a comma splice; choice C has an incorrect use of the colon with no comma after *however*; and choice D is a run-on sentence.

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| Strand | Writing Conventions | Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence. |
| Standard | <p data-bbox="428 443 509 474">10.1.2</p> <p data-bbox="237 478 691 695"><i>Understand sentence construction (e.g., parallel structure, subordination, proper placement of modifiers) and proper English usage (e.g., consistency of verb tenses).</i></p> <p data-bbox="428 737 509 768">10.1.3</p> <p data-bbox="237 772 691 953"><i>Demonstrate an understanding of proper English usage and control of grammar, paragraph and sentence structure, diction, and syntax.</i></p> | <p data-bbox="802 436 1338 506">The musician played Wendy’s favorite waltz for her husband and _____.</p> <p data-bbox="802 548 867 579">A I</p> <p data-bbox="802 600 883 632">B he</p> <p data-bbox="802 653 899 684">C she</p> <p data-bbox="802 705 899 737">D her</p> |

Grammar

As illustrated by the use of italics in the standards reprinted above, CAHSEE test questions for standards 10.1.2 and 10.1.3 may require students to understand the correct use of the conventions of English grammar and usage. Students should recognize correct agreement between subjects and verbs and between pronouns and antecedents. Correct use of nouns and pronouns is also tested, as well as the correct use of pronouns as the object of a preposition. Test questions may also address other problems in student writing, including verb tense, commonly confused homonyms, common usage errors (e.g., affect/effect, except/accept), and the use of adverbs and adjectives. Test questions may be based on passages that represent rough drafts of typical student writing, or they may be stand-alone items (not based on a passage).

The sample test question focuses on use of the case of a pronoun used as the object of a preposition. The question reflects a common student error, using the subjective rather than the objective case with a compound object of a preposition. Students should understand that the correct choice is D because it is the only one that would be used if the object were simple rather than compound (i.e., “for her”).

Strand Writing Conventions**Standard 10.1.5 Reflect appropriate manuscript requirements, including title page presentation, pagination, spacing and margins, and integration of source and support material (e.g., in-text citation, use of direct quotations, paraphrasing) with appropriate citations.**

CAHSEE test questions in this standard require students to understand the methods commonly used for in-text reference—quotations, citations, and paraphrasing. Students will be asked to recognize correct punctuation for incorporating previously published material in text, as well as the conventions of in-text citation. Students may also be asked to identify a missing part in a manuscript, e.g., title page, page numbers, student name, or date. Test questions may be based on passages that represent rough drafts of typical student writing, or they may be stand-alone items (not based on a passage).

The Writing Applications Strand

To demonstrate achievement in this CAHSEE strand, students must successfully respond to two on-demand writing tasks. The first task is a response to a reading passage, either literary or informational. Students are asked to analyze the passage and write a text-based response. The CAHSEE 4-point Response to Literary/Expository Text Scoring Guide, which is based on the Writing Applications content standards, is used to score these questions. This scoring guide is reprinted in Appendix A of this guide.

The second writing task on the CAHSEE is a response to a writing prompt. Students are asked to write a response based on their own knowledge and viewpoints about a given topic. The CAHSEE 4-point Response to Writing Prompt Scoring Guide, which is based on the Writing Applications content standards, is used to score these questions. This scoring guide is reprinted in Appendix A of this guide.

All student essays written for the CAHSEE are scored by two trained scorers who use the rubric to assign a score of 1, 2, 3, or 4. If the two scorers give different but adjacent scores (e.g., a 3 and a 4), the student's final score is an average of the two scores. If the two scorers give different and nonadjacent scores (e.g., a 2 and a 4), a Scoring Leader reads the essay and assigns the score. Papers receive NS (No Score) if they are blank, off-topic, illegible, unintelligible, or written in a language other than English.

The following pages discuss the four content standards in the Writing Applications Strand on the CAHSEE. Included are annotated sample student responses for three released CAHSEE writing tasks: response to literature, expository essay, and persuasive essay.

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| Strand | Writing Applications |
| Standard | 10.2.1 Write biographical narratives <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Relate a sequence of events and communicate the significance of the events to the audience.b. Locate scenes and incidents in specific places.c. Describe with concrete sensory details the sights, sounds, and smells of a scene and the specific actions, movements, gestures, and feelings of the characters; use interior monologue to depict the characters' feelings.d. Pace the presentation of actions to accommodate changes in time and mood.e. Make effective use of descriptions of appearance, images, shifting perspectives, and sensory details. |

The CAHSEE writing tasks for this standard require students to write a biographical narrative. Students are not given autobiographical narrative tasks to ensure that test questions addressing this standard are consistent with California Education Code section 60614, which prohibits questions that solicit or invite disclosure of a pupil's or his or her parents' or guardians' personal beliefs or practices. Students will not be given a short story task because it may be an unfamiliar task for many high school students.

Stand-alone constructed-response writing tasks are used to assess this standard. The student responses to the prompts are scored according to a specific guide developed from the 4-point CAHSEE Scoring Guide for writing prompts, reprinted in Appendix A of this guide.

| | | |
|--|-----------------------------|---|
| Strand | Writing Applications | In the story “The Hiking Trip,” the reader learns about the main character, Jeff. Jeff’s personality and emotions are revealed through the actions and dialog presented in the story. |
| Standard | 10.2.2 | Write an essay in which you describe the personality and emotions of Jeff, the main character. How do his personal characteristics add to the events in the story? How does the author reveal this information about Jeff in the story? Use details and examples from the story to support your ideas. |
| Write responses to literature. | | |
| a. Demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the significant ideas of literary works. | | |
| b. Support important ideas and viewpoints through accurate and detailed references to the text or to other works. | | |
| c. Demonstrate awareness of the author’s use of stylistic devices and an appreciation of the effects created. | | |
| d. Identify and assess the impact of perceived ambiguities, nuances, and complexities within the text. | | |

The CAHSEE writing tasks for this standard are passage-based constructed-response prompts. Literary or informational passages may be used as the basis for the questions, and each prompt directs students to use information from the passage in the response. The student responses to the tasks are scored according to a specific guide developed from the 4-point CAHSEE Scoring Guide for responses to literary or expository text, reprinted in Appendix A of this guide.

Test questions addressing this standard are consistent with California Education Code section 60614, which prohibits questions that solicit or invite disclosure of a pupil’s or his or her parents’ or guardians’ personal beliefs or practices.

This prompt is based on the passage “The Hiking Trip,” which is reproduced in Appendix C of this guide. The prompt is related to two of the Literary Response and Analysis standards: 10.3.4, which requires students to analyze the text to determine what a character is like and 10.3.3, which requires students to understand how character affects the plot. Accurate and complete responses illustrate a thorough grasp of the text and summarize Jeff’s personality and emotions, with use of specific evidence from the text. Four-point responses also describe the ways that Jeff’s character affects the events of the story, incorporating specific references to the text.

Students were given the following checklist, along with the prompt, to aid them in writing a response.

Checklist for Your Writing

The following checklist will help you do your best work. Make sure you:

- ☐ **Carefully read the reading passage and the description of the task.**
- ☐ **Organize your writing with a strong introduction, body, and conclusion.**
- ☐ **Use specific details and examples from the passage to demonstrate your understanding of the main ideas and the author's purpose.**
- ☐ **Use precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose.**
- ☐ **Vary your sentences to make your writing interesting to read.**
- ☐ **Check for mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence formation.**

The following pages provide a sample student essay at each of the four score points, with commentary and rationale for the given score. The student responses have been typed with the students' own content, grammar, spelling, capitalization, and spelling.

4

Score Point 4 Student Response

Commentary

In the story "The Hiking Trip" Jeff had to hike down a canyon and go get help for his brother Mark. Jeff is courageous and loving, and his true character is revealed by his actions.

The author gradually reveals Jeff's bravery through his actions and his decision to save Mark. At first, Jeff is afraid of hiking down the canyon alone. The father tells Jeff to have courage and Jeff exclaims that he doesn't want it. The father also tells Jeff to have enough love for his brother to save him. Even though he is afraid and doesn't want to hike down the canyon, Jeff does it anyways. He does it to try to save his brother. This point in the story shows Jeff's love for his brother and his determination to save him.

This is the turning point in the story. If Jeff had not made the decision to hike down the canyon alone the outcome of the story may be entirely different. Jeff's bravery, love, and perserverance played an enormous role in this story. Without them he may have never tried or been able to save Mark.

This story shows how someone can overcome their own fears to help others. Jeff was an example of unselfishness, bravery, and courage. His character traits caused him to do what was right and they (his character traits) may have been the deciding point of his action and later on the outcomes of his story.

In this response, the writer addresses all parts of the writing task, which include describing Jeff's personality and emotions, identifying the way the author reveals Jeff's personality, and relating Jeff's personality to the plot. The response also illustrates a comprehensive grasp of the text.

The first paragraph of the response summarizes the main action of the story and states the thesis, that Jeff is courageous and loving and that his "true character is revealed by his actions."

Next, the writer gives more detail about the main action of the story, using evidence from the text to show how Jeff's actions reveal his courage and love. Specific references to the text are included (e.g., "the father also tells Jeff to have enough love for his brother to save him").

In the third paragraph, the writer focuses on the relationship between Jeff's personality and the plot, identifying the turning point in the story as Jeff's decision to go for help alone and tying this decision to Jeff's love and determination: "Without them he may have never tried or been able to save Mark."

The use of precise language and a variety of sentence types add to the success of this essay. There are only a few errors in the conventions of written English within this response, and they are generally first-draft in nature. Overall, this essay is a sample of a 4-point response.

3

Score Point 3 Student Response

To understand who Jeff is, you have to realize what he has to go through in the story. In the beginning, Jeff is afraid to hike and doesn't want to have the courage to climb the mountain. After Jeff's dad says, "If not courage, fine. Then have enough love for your brother," Jeff realizes that he has to do it to save his brother's life. He becomes determined to find help. He thinks about how badly his brother needs medical attention.

Jeff becomes so determined to get help, he begins to climb faster and faster until he passes up his dad. He says to himself "Can't stop, Mark's in big trouble." This shows how his love for his brother has substituted for the courage that he did want to have. Do you think that his love for his brother gives him the courage or the will to climb the mountain and get help for Mark.

Hours later after Mark is rescued, Jeff wakes up but doesn't know what had happened. His father tells him that he's a hero and that he saved his brothers life. He had pushed himself to the limits trying to get help for Mark. His love for Mark had given him the will, the determination, and the courage to get over his fear and climb the mountain for help.

Commentary

In this response, the writer explicitly or implicitly addresses all parts of the writing task and shows a good grasp of the text.

The first paragraph of the response summarizes the main action of the story and suggests the thesis that is later expressed in the final paragraph—that Jeff has determination, courage, and love. The second paragraph summarizes events in the story to show that the author uses the events to reveal Jeff's character, although this connection is not explicitly stated. The final paragraph sums up Jeff's role in the plot: "His father tells him that he's a hero and that he saved his brothers life." Again, this relationship is not explicitly stated.

The response represents a 3-point paper because it addresses all parts of the writing task and shows a good grasp of the story. Also, it makes specific references to the text (e.g., "Can't stop, Mark's in big trouble"). However, it lacks the purposeful control of organization and explicit statement of ideas that characterize a 4-point paper. The observations about Jeff's personality are structured by the story line rather than directed by the writer. The paper also illustrates an inconsistent sense of audience, as shown by the direct address to the reader in the first and second paragraphs.

There are only a few errors in the conventions of written English within this response, but they do not interfere with the meaning. Overall, this essay is a sample of a 3-point response.

2

Score Point 2 Student Response

Jeff, the main character shows much of his personality and emotions. He is an understanding and motivating person. He knows what strength he has but he doesn't know how to use it. Although Jeff has many fears and knows he must overcome them to save his brother. His father knows his sons power, but its Jeff who doesn't realize his own. Jeff doesn't have self confidence of self will. His emotions in the story change. He starts off as a boy who doesn't believe in himself, to a boy who's emotions completely change under the circumstances. He must save his brother in order know if he really has inner power inside of him. This was the test. His personal characteristics add to the event of the story by making it more intense. The more intense the better the story. He adds problem to the story line and a resolution He doubts his own strength but he ends up winning.

Commentary

In this response, the writer addresses some parts of the writing task and demonstrates a limited understanding of the main elements of the story. The response begins with three very general statements about Jeff's personality. Then the writer begins to focus on a potential thesis that could be supported by textual evidence: "Although Jeff has many fears and knows he must overcome them to save his brother." This statement also shows the writer's grasp of important ideas within the text. As the response continues, the statement that Jeff must overcome his fears receives additional development with the assertion that Jeff's emotions "completely change under the circumstances." However, these ideas receive no additional development through the use of textual evidence.

The final sentences of the response begin to address the relationship between Jeff's personality and the plot: "His personal characteristics add to the event of the story by making it more intense." One of these sentences uses the vocabulary of plot analysis ("He adds problem to the story line and a resolution") but provides little actual analysis.

The lack of a clear thesis statement and the failure to develop ideas by using evidence from the text are characteristic of a 2-point paper. The response also fails to demonstrate a purposeful control over organization. There is some variety in sentence structure, but there are several errors in the conventions of written English. Overall, this essay is an example of a 2-point response.

1

Score Point 1 Student Response

This story tells about a boy who has doesn't want to go on a trip with his father and learn more about hiking but then, when he gets their he realizes the important thing that is about hiking. His father was really understanding and motovating, one of the things Jeff new it was important to learn hiking was for what happened to his father the accident he had, he knew it was important cause he know what to do during an accident.

Commentary

This response begins to address the writing task in its opening statement: "This story tells about a boy who has doesn't want to go on a trip with his father." However, there is little understanding of the main elements of the story; the response continues by implying that the primary issue is the value of hiking and that Jeff's father (not his brother) has had an accident.

The failure to demonstrate a grasp of the text, the lack of a main idea, the failure to develop ideas using evidence from the text, and the serious errors in the conventions of written English make this a 1-point response.

Strand Writing Applications

Standard 10.2.3

Write expository compositions, including analytical essays and research reports.

- a. Marshal evidence in support of a thesis and related claims, including information on all relevant perspectives.**
- b. Convey information and ideas from primary and secondary sources accurately and coherently.**
- c. Make distinctions between the relative value and significance of specific data, facts, and ideas.**
- d. ~~Include visual aids by~~
~~—employing appropriate~~
~~—technology to organize and~~
~~—record information on charts,~~
~~—maps, and graphs.~~**
- e. Anticipate and address readers' potential misunderstandings, biases, and expectations.**
- f. Use technical terms and notations accurately.**

By the time students enter high school, they have learned about many moments in history that have influenced our world today. Think about a moment in history you studied and consider its importance.

Write a composition in which you discuss a moment in history. Share its importance in today's world. Be sure to support the moment with details and examples.

The CAHSEE writing tasks for this standard are either stand-alone or passage-based constructed-response writing prompts. For passage-based questions, literary or informational passages may be used, and the questions will direct students to use information from the passage in their responses. Both kinds of questions are consistent with California Education Code section 60614, which prohibits questions that solicit or invite disclosure of a pupil's or his or her parents' or guardians' personal beliefs or practices. The student responses to the tasks are scored according to a specific guide developed from the 4-point CAHSEE Scoring Guide for either literary responses or writing prompts. Both of these scoring guides are reprinted in Appendix A of this guide.

The sample writing task requires students to identify and discuss a moment in history. Four-point responses establish a thesis about the importance of that moment to the world

today and support the thesis with specific evidence, including facts and ideas. Four-point responses also address readers' potential misunderstandings, bias, and expectations.

Students were given the following checklist, along with the prompt, to aid them in writing a response.

Checklist for Your Writing

The following checklist will help you do your best work. Make sure you:

- ☐ **Read the description of the task carefully.**
- ☐ **Use specific details and examples to fully support your ideas.**
- ☐ **Organize your writing with a strong introduction, body, and conclusion.**
- ☐ **Choose specific words that are appropriate for your audience and purpose.**
- ☐ **Vary your sentences to make your writing interesting to read.**
- ☐ **Check for mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence formation.**

The following pages provide a sample student essay at each of the four score points, with commentary and rationale for the given score. The student responses have been typed with the students' own content, grammar, spelling, capitalization, and spelling.

4

Score Point 4 Student Response

While thinking about a moment in history that has influenced our world today, many events come to mind. But an event that seems prominent is not an event at all, but rather a time period and the accomplishments that took place within it, the Industrial Revolution.

Having learned about the Industrial era just recently a few aspects remain vivid in my mind, such as the many new inventions that served to make our lives easier. The steam engine was developed allowing cities to form in locations other than near water sources, as things had been previously. Once inside those cities, people all came together working in factories which was much more efficient.

Through the factory system, goods were produced at a much faster rate, requiring less work so prices were less. Different social classes could afford items causing a change in social structure. Women and children began working stirring up awareness and laws about labor. Unions were formed as a result as well as more organized forms of education. Every aspect of life changed within this time period including advances in medicine, communications, and the way we manufacture today. The moments throughout the Industrial Revolution hold so much importance, they brought us to the way our world is today.

Commentary

In this response, the writer address all parts of the writing task, which is to discuss a moment in history and share its importance in the world today. The writer provides a meaningful thesis that suggests that the events that took place during the Industrial Revolution have influenced our world today. This statement is followed with purposefully organized support to illustrate just why this period in history was so influential.

In the second paragraph, the writer discusses how the steam engine positively affected the growth of cities and how factories grew in the cities.

An additional discussion on the factory system is developed in the third paragraph. The writer provides thoughtful support through the use of specific details to illustrate the effects that factories had on people. More detail is included to show how the existence of factories helped create unions, causing a "change in social structure."

As the essay comes to a close, the writer provides more detail about the Industrial Revolution to connect its positive effect on how it "brought us to the way our world is today."

The variety of sentence types and the use of precise, descriptive language all add to the success of this essay. There are only a few errors in the conventions of written English within this response, and they are generally first-draft in nature. Overall, this essay is a sample of a 4-point response.

3

Score Point 3 Student Response

One of the most important days in history so far is the day that man set foot on the moon. This was not only important in U.S. history, but it was important to everywhere else in the world too. This amazing achievement showed Americans that they can do anything they want, if they try hard enough, and it showed other countries how great we really are.

The day that man set foot on the moon was a very exciting day. A lot of people didn't believe that it really happened because it was so amazing. But when everyone realized that it really happened, it gave them the courage to strive for their goals and achieve them.

For years before man stepped on the moon, other countries had been trying to and were unsuccessful. But, America was able to. This made the other countries have so much more respect for us.

Today's space missions can be traced directly to the success of the moon landing. When man set foot on the moon, it was honestly one of the most important days in history because of what took place as a result of it.

Commentary

In this response to the writing prompt, the writer discusses "the day that man set foot on the moon." The thesis expresses the idea that this event was an amazing achievement that affected both Americans and the rest of the world and that it proved that "Americans . . . can do anything they want if they try hard enough . . ."

The thesis is supported in an organized manner with details and examples. In the second paragraph, the writer concludes that the event was responsible for giving people the "courage to strive for their goals and achieve them." In the third paragraph, the writer suggests that other countries respect the United States for having sent men to walk on the moon.

The writer concludes with the idea that setting foot on the moon was "one of the most important days in history . . ."

The writer addresses all parts of the task through discussion of what the event was and how it affected the world today. The details and examples used to support the thesis are more general than in a 4-point response, but they successfully support the thesis.

The use of a variety of sentences along with a general sense of audience is evident throughout the essay. There are a few errors in the conventions of written English, but they do not interfere with the reader's understanding. Overall, this essay is a sample of a 3-point response.

2

Score Point 2 Student Response

A moment in history that I had studied was when Ben Franklin discovered electricity. Electricity is important today, we use it for a lot of stuff. If he did not discover electricity, we probably wouldn't have a lot of stuff that we have now like lights, heat, air conditioning and a lot other things. He could have gotten electrocuted trying to discover it. So it is a good thing that he had find it out. Without electricity we can" do a lot of stuff we do now. We would have to use candles for light or just day light

Commentary

In this response to the writing prompt, the writer discusses Ben Franklin's discovery in a very limited manner. No explanation is provided about the event itself. The writer provides only a few details to support the idea that "electricity is important today . . ." Through the use of basic, predictable language, the idea that "we probably wouldn't have a lot of stuff that we have now . . ." is suggested. The language used to support this idea is limited to the word "stuff" that appears three times in this short paragraph.

There is little variety at the sentence level, and there are several errors in the conventions of written English. The overall word choice and lack of development illustrate a limited sense of audience. This essay exemplifies the criteria for a 2-point response.

1

Score Point 1 Student Response

We studied about all kind of stuff in History. Every thing we stuyed in History I learned Something know eveyday. History is go because you get to learn about all kinds of knew things aboutat whats going on In this world.

Commentary

In this response to the writing prompt, the writer provides no thesis related to the prompt beyond the idea that “we studied all kind of stuff in History.” No attempt is made to discuss an event in history.

The ideas presented are no more than a brief discussion on the value of learning history. They are expressed with a lack of control at both the sentence and the language level. There are errors in the conventions of written English in each of the three sentences written in the 1-point response.

| | | |
|--|----------------------|---|
| Strand | Writing Applications | Some students at your school have expressed an interest in making the school more attractive by getting rid of the trash on the school grounds. |
| Standard | 10.2.4 | |
| Write persuasive compositions. | | Write a persuasive essay for your school paper in which you convince the readers of the importance of getting rid of the trash and making the school more attractive. Convince your readers through the use of specific reasons and examples. |
| a. Structure ideas and arguments in a sustained and logical fashion. | | |
| b. Use specific rhetorical devices to support assertions (e.g., appeal to logic through reasoning; appeal to emotion or ethical belief; relate a personal anecdote, case study, or analogy). | | |
| c. Clarify and defend positions with precise and relevant evidence, including facts, expert opinions, quotations, and expressions of commonly accepted beliefs and logical reasoning. | | |
| d. Address readers' concerns, counterclaims, biases, and expectations. | | |
| e Use technical terms and notations accurately. | | |

Stand-alone writing tasks are used to assess this standard. The student responses to these prompts are scored according to a specific guide developed from the 4-point CAHSEE Scoring Guide for writing prompts, reprinted in Appendix A of this guide.

The tasks addressing this standard are consistent with California Education Code section 60614, which prohibits items that solicit or invite disclosure of a pupil's or his or her parents' or guardians' personal beliefs or practices.

This prompt asks students to state and defend a position with regard to the importance of getting rid of trash at school. Many successful papers also discuss ways to reduce the amount of trash, but the main focus of the prompt should be reasons that getting rid of trash is desirable. Four-point papers develop a persuasive essay as described in standard

10.2.4 above, using relevant evidence and anticipating readers' concerns and counterclaims.

Students were given the following checklist, along with the prompt, to aid them in writing a response.

Checklist for Your Writing

The following checklist will help you do your best work. Make sure you:

- ☐ Read the description of the task carefully.
- ☐ Organize your writing with a strong introduction, body, and conclusion.
- ☐ State your position, support it with specific examples, and address the reader's concerns.
- ☐ Use words that are appropriate for your audience and purpose.
- ☐ Vary your sentences to make your writing interesting to read.
- ☐ Check for mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence formation.

The following pages provide a sample student essay at each of the four score points, with commentary and rationale for the given score. The student responses have been typed with the students' own content, grammar, spelling, capitalization, and spelling.

4

Score Point 4 Student Response

Commentary

Would you enjoy taking your classes at the city dump? Trash is not beautiful. It is a well-known fact that students learn better when they're in a clean environment. To be more attractive, trash on our school grounds must be picked up. The importance of picking up trash is to beautify our campus and make our school a healthier place to learn.

In this response, the writer addresses all parts of the persuasive writing task: stating a position about the importance of cleaning up trash, defending the position with evidence, and anticipating the reader's concerns. The first paragraph gives the writer's position ("trash on our school grounds must be picked up") and then gives two reasons that picking up trash is very

We want our campus to be attractive and clean, right? When rival schools come to compete against us, we don't want them going home criticizing us because of our campus. We don't want our mascot become a rat or a pig in their eyes. We want to keep our campus clean to show that we're not slobs and are educated enough to pick up our own garbage.

Who would want to eat lunch inside a dumpster? Or exercise in a gym that smells like rotten eggs and spoiled milk? We need a campus that will make it easier and healthier to learn. Would essays show the student's best if they brainstormed ideas while looking out the window at old food, used bandaids, empty soda cans and gum wrappers? The way this campus looks influences the way we perform in our classrooms. To get the maximum quality work done, we need clean and sanitary workspaces.

In conclusion, picking up any trash around school will be beneficial to everybody, especially us. If you see a piece of paper blowin around stop it with your foot and bend down, pick it up, then throw it away. There's no reason why our campus needs to be anything other than attractive. With everyone's help, it can be attractive and provide a better learning atmosphere.

important ("to beautify our campus and make our school a healthier place to learn"). These two ideas become the focus for the rest of the essay.

The writer uses the questions that open each of the next two paragraphs to anticipate objections to cleaning up trash, thereby addressing the reader's potential concerns. The second paragraph provides several images to support the argument that a more attractive campus would provide specific benefits (e.g., "We don't want our mascot to become a rat or a pig in their [rival schools'] eyes"). Although the third paragraph provides little detail about the health aspects of the argument, it does use specific details to develop the concept that a clean environment is conducive to learning. The essay provides a strong conclusion that not only restates the writer's position but also extends the argument with a call to action: "If you see a piece of paper blowin around, stop it with your foot and bend down, pick it up, then throw it away".

The essay demonstrates the control of organization that is required for a 4-point paper, and the stated position is developed with details. Although there is a misplaced modifier ("To be more attractive, trash . . ."), and a few additional errors in conventions, overall the writer demonstrates control of conventions. The essay also uses a variety of sentence types and precise, descriptive language. Overall, this essay is a sample of a 4-point response.

3

Score Point 3 Student Response

Nobody would like it if people stopped picking up trash and let our school become filled with trash. It is very important to keep our school clean to provide an appropriate learning environment. If everyone would help out our school would look more attractive.

A clean school campus would offer a nicer and appropriate learning environment. A dirty school makes it harder to concentrate on school work. If trash covered the campus students might be looking out classroom windows for what awaits them after class and wondering why someone is not cleaning it up. A clean school would help the students concentrate so grades might raise not only making the school look better on the outside but academically as well.

No one enjoys being in a dirty environment. Before school, snack, lunch, and after school would be much less enjoyable to both the students and faculty if our campus was dirty. People do not like eating in trash filled lunch areas and so there would be more students leaving school permitted or not for lunch. Basically, students and teachers would not be able to stand being in a dirty environment during school hours.

In conclusion living environments are kept clean and so it is equally important to keep learning environments clean as well. Both the students and faculty spend large portions of their days here so to make school a little better and more attractive our school needs to be kept clean. It would be easy if everyone just did their part.

Commentary

In this response to the writing prompt, the writer begins with a paragraph that states three positions about picking up trash—that “Nobody would like” a school “filled with trash,” that a clean school provides “an appropriate learning environment,” and that a clean school would “look more attractive.” The paragraphs that follow discuss each of these ideas.

The second paragraph of the essay focuses on the learning environment, explaining that students can concentrate better if there is no trash on campus. The third paragraph addresses the idea that “no one enjoys being in a dirty environment.” The final paragraph restates the idea that the school could look more attractive if everyone helped.

In general, the paper defends the three positions with some details and examples, but the development is not as thoughtful or thorough as that in a 4-point paper. In the third paragraph, for example, each sentence restates the topic sentence and adds only a few additional details.

The paper addresses readers’ concerns and expectations in a general way by stating that “Nobody would like it if people stopped picking up trash” and “No one enjoys being in a dirty environment,” and thus a general sense of audience is evident throughout the essay.

There are a few errors in the conventions of written English, but they do not interfere with the reader’s understanding. Overall, this essay is an example of a 3-point response to this writing task.

2

Score Point 2 Student Response

The importance of getting rid of garbage on school camps is very important. The importance of getting rid of the garbage is makeing are school look nice, giving less work for the teachers and janitors to do. Another reason it is important because if I don't look oke people are going to think that it isn't a good school.

I think that this a good subject to write on because the trash on school campus is terrible. School campuses have alot of garbage because people don't care about throwing there trash away. But people need to think more reasonsivly because they are destroying the earth if they do not pick up there garbage. So people from now on when you have garbage don't throw it on the ground throw it in the garbage can.

Another reason it is important for people not to litter because this where we live and we don't need to destroy where we live. Pluse what would other people come to our school meaning the district office people think of us if we just left our trash all over the ground that would make us look bad.

Commentary

In this response to the writing prompt, the writer begins by stating three reasons that picking up trash is important: "makeing are school look nice," "giving less work for the teachers and janitors to do," and preventing people from thinking "that it isn't a good school."

Although the paper states these positions with some authority, it fails to support them in the paragraphs that follow. The second paragraph focuses on a new, although related, topic, that people should pick up their trash to avoid destroying the earth. The third paragraph moves from the idea that trash destroys the earth to the idea that it destroys "where we live." This paragraph also contains an attempt to develop the third position in the opening paragraph, that having trash around suggests that this isn't a good school: "if we just left our trash all over the ground that would make us look bad."

This essay provides little or no support for its thesis, shows little control over organization, and demonstrates an inconsistent tone and focus. It also fails to anticipate readers' concerns. These factors, in addition to the lack of control over the conventions of written English, particularly spelling, make this essay an example of a 2-point response.

1

Score Point 1 Student Response

It would be a good idea to clean up our envirement, maybe if there was more trash cans well you could make our schlool cleaner if just everybody picked up on thing our schlool would not be 3/4ths clean that's how bad our mess has gotten to who wants to attend a school that's now for the trash and ants and roaches etc. No one does that's why we should clean our school & our great reward in the end a clean & safe and healthy envirement and school.

Commentary

In this response to the writing prompt, the writer begins with the position that cleaning up the environment is a good idea. This statement is followed by two suggestions—that there could be more trash cans and that everyone should help pick up trash. Another topic follows, which is a description of the extent of the trash problem at school, and then the final sentence of the response reaffirms that cleaning up trash will have beneficial results.

This response offers several ideas related to the topic but fails to support these ideas with details or examples. In addition, the response lacks consistency of focus and fails to demonstrate a control of organization. The serious errors in the conventions of written English, particularly in sentence boundaries, interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay and result in a score of 1.